

The current E-rate requirement to receive discounts on a T1 line used for video distance learning is that the T1 line must be provided by a "telco". In Texas, we have 20 Regional Service Centers which were organized and setup in the 1960's to provide SERVICES to the districts in their geographical region on a cost recovery system. Today, these services to school districts include professional development training; technical support in all areas of the curriculum, finance, technology, and other areas; and the implementation and maintenance of a statewide network.

The statewide network or WAN was and still is a goal of the "Texas Long Range Plan for Technology 1996 - 2010". Without this ISP service, provided by the Regional Service Centers, the rural districts could not afford to have a network that connects to the statewide WAN. No telco will provide ISP services to the rural districts in Texas at a reasonable/affordable cost.

If the E-rate requirement remains as is and states that in order for data to flow through the pipeline/T1 line, the line must be provided by a telco, then the rural districts in Texas will not be able to afford a T1 line to accomplish the following:

1. provide distance learning classes to the high school students such as Spanish, Calculus, Art, Physics and other classes
2. provide field trips to the Texas students - an example is connecting to students in England, South America, students in other states and connecting to resources such as the Grace Museum and Zoos for learning experiences
3. provide field trips to students across the world with topics such as "How Windmills Work", "What is a Real Cowboy Like", "From Cotton in the Fields to Clothing", and others
4. connect to the state education agency, Texas Education Agency, in Austin and send district reports via the T1 line currently provided by their Regional Service Center which connects to the state WAN at a very low cost
5. students will not be able to take state mandated accountability tests using the T1 line currently provided by their Regional Service Center

All of the above activities will be cost prohibitive if a rural district has to use a telco to directly provide their T1 line instead of using a consortium through the Service Center for access to data driven or video/audio activities.

Telcos are not losing funding in the state of Texas due to the regional consortia ISPs. Service Centers are paying telcos for the T1 lines and passing the cost onto the districts through a consortium where the cost is shared among 42 or more districts. This method is cost effective even for small rural schools.

Don't we want the most cost effective method to provide access to resources, classes, data, training and testing for our students and staff? Aren't the telcos getting their share of the educational funds?

Thanks for your careful attention to this educational matter,
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